

## GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library  
Business Meeting Minutes  
November 12, 2008  
(Approved 12/03/08)

### **PRESENT:**

Mr. Peter Carson  
Ms Berta Erickson  
Mr. Jim Frey  
Dr. Paul Funch, Chair  
Mr. Chuck McKinney, Vice-Chair  
Mr. Frank O'Connell  
Mr. Jon Sjoberg, Secretary

### **ADMINISTRATION:**

Dr. Alan Genovese, Superintendent  
Timothy Sheehan, Director of Business and Finance  
Dr. Susan Rubel, Director of Curriculum/Staff Development

### **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES:**

Brittany Bowes and Erin Christman

**STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS:** P. Comtois, Groton Landmark;

### **CALL TO ORDER:**

The GDRSC Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by the chair, P. Funch

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS/SPOTLIGHT**

None

### **PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION**

#### **MCAS Analysis and Action Plan - Sue Rubel**

Dr. Rubel reviewed the action plans developed for each grade span for each content area. She said members will hear a lot of similarities, even amongst the grade spans.

They have quite a high achievement level for ELA at the elementary level and while they are making some good gains, they are not consistent across the grade levels. Areas identified as needing improvement at the elementary level include focusing on nonfiction text, differentiating instruction to get at higher level seeking skills in reading and improving open response writing and the understanding of parts of speech.

For ELA at the middle school, teachers identified specific strategies and in some cases, they need to re-order how they teach (i.e.: teach the poetry unit earlier in the year). Epic poetry needs to be an emphasis at the eighth grade level and they are considering teaching a unit on Genesis since it is part of the ELA frameworks. J. Frey asked what sort of problems would be created by bringing this in and Dr. Rubel said it is a recommended reading as part of the ELA state frameworks and would be approached as an epic. He suggested they be prepared to offer alternatives.

Students at the high school level have done very well, with 94% in Advanced and Proficient and they continue to approve. Students have to have at least a Proficient in ELA and math in order to graduate and Dr. Rubel said 93% have met the competency determination. C. McKinney noted they are talking about less than 10 students who are not Proficient or Advanced. There is an after school academic support program and a test prep session for any student wanting specific preparation strategies. Dr. Rubel clarified this refers to current

10<sup>th</sup> grade students and there is no one in the eleventh or twelfth grade who has not met the competency determination.

Dr. Funch asked how verbal skills are put “into the mix” and Dr. Rubel said it is not tested but is part of the ELA frameworks and is embedded from pre-school on.

With respect to math, Dr. Rubel said they have different skills and strategies that students were strong in, or less strong in, depending upon the school. Swallow Union’s grade 3 showed a jump from 72% to 85% in the Proficient category. Across the board, students are strong in computation skills but are less strong in the open response types of questions and they are working on giving explicit instruction in how to solve a math problem.

B. Erickson said she has very strong concerns about the grades 1- 8 math program and questioned whether the program itself may be the problem. She noted the program has been discarded at other school districts. Dr. Rubel said they are seeing improvement at the middle school where students were not making AYP. The framework expects students to do this kind of math thinking aloud and do the higher level problem solving and traditional math programs would not expose students to these expectations. Dr. Genovese said the state wants students to solve problems that were not predictable and these programs are giving them the skills to work in groups collaboratively to do that. They do need to be sure teachers have enough tools to provide support for those kids who are struggling with this approach.

J. Sjoberg asked why Swallow Union is showing greater achievement than Florence Roche and Dr. Rubel said she has not spoken with both principals together but it may have to do with different emphases in the different buildings. It could also be when they have the material in relation to the test and the implementation of instruction. C. McKinney said they will constantly see differentials, particularly at the elementary schools, because that is where there is the least directive on how much time should be spent on each individual concept. Dr. Genovese said they need to have common assessments at the elementary level and Dr. Rubel said they are using the math end of unit assessment across the board.

At the middle school level, Dr. Rubel said the students made AYP in all subgroups last year. They have made strong progress in math and this can be attributed to a number of things including the consistent implementation of Investigations and CMP2, in-class support and coaching from the coordinator and after school intervention programs. Ninety-six percent of the high school students are in the Advanced or Proficient category for math and 95% have met the competency determination. They are in the process of developing EPP’s (Education Proficiency Plan) for the seven students who have not met the competency determination to monitor their progress.

Science, technology and engineering are tested in grades 5, 8 and 9 or 10 depending on the test, and the middle school students have scored quite well in science and particularly in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade test. Weaker areas are in the technology and engineering unit and teachers have identified specific areas that need to be addressed. At the high school, most of the students take the biology MCAS exam and 76% scored in the Advanced or Proficient category. The particular strengths were in ecology and one main weakness was in open response. They are looking at revising core assignments and the open response questions embedded in every course. They are developing a test prep before the science MCAS and for the first time, will be providing a summer school program .

The history and social science test is still being piloted and they only receive a test item analysis with raw scores. With US history becoming part of the high stakes graduation requirement, they are realigning the curriculum at grades 8 through 12 so it will be taught in grades 10 and 11. The “real test” will be taken in grade 11.

P. Carson sees positive things coming out of MCAS. He asked if there is anything at the macro level that says what they are trying to do is working. Dr. Rubel said this question has been raised by many middle school parents and believes the real question is if we doing any kind of assessment to compare how our students are

doing with other students. She said they have not done a standardized test that measures against the norm. They are using norm reference tests for some of their special programs.

### **Charge of Communication Advisory Committee**

J. Frey reviewed their goal to promote more effective communications with both the school community and the communities at large. They came up with committee assignments and they will build on, and take actions on, efforts and recommendations of the Communications Research Team (CRT) which was in place in 2007-2008. They also want to see what new initiatives and techniques are available to open communications. The timeline and objectives were reviewed.

C. McKinney asked if they will be implementing any of the CRT's recommendations and if they will be producing communication documents for the budget cycle. J. Frey said they feel they can implement some of the CRT's recommendations quickly, such as clearly outlining how someone communicates with the committee and portions of the district, improving the effectiveness and process around the "public comment" section of the website and re-evaluating the website as a whole. The intention of the committee is to "take action", not just make recommendations. A statement that says the committee will provide communications support to the school committee, and sub-committees, for any needs that come up will be added as an assignment.

### **MASC Resolutions**

Dr. Funch read the summary and rationale for each resolution and a straw vote was taken on each.

J. Frey said he accepts responsibility to represent the committee at the conference. Dr. Genovese will provide him with copies of position papers.

#### **Resolution 1 - Special Education Counts in the Foundation Budget**

Dr. Genovese said it will be important to look at how they are looking at the foundation budget and to get clarity on the actual costs. Members unanimously support this resolution.

#### **Resolution 2 - Advocacy Agenda**

This resolution reaffirms eight advocacy positions on matters of public policy. It is the consensus that positions 1, 2 and 3 are most important and J. Frey will propose that these should have their own resolutions.

#### **Resolution 3 - Public Policy Regarding Readiness Project**

This resolution reaffirms nine advocacy positions on matters of public policy.

B. Erickson opposed this resolution.

#### **Resolution 4 - Loss of Chapter 70 State Financial Aid for Students Enrolled in Charter Schools**

When a student leaves the home district to enroll in a Commonwealth Charter School, the state reduces the sending district's Chapter 70 reimbursement by an amount based on the per-pupil spending of the district and in all cases, this is a larger amount than the \$5,000 school choice allocation.

P. Carson abstained and the other members support this resolution.

While members have given him direction, it was agreed J. Frey will have the flexibility to take a different vote as other information may come to light during discussions.

### **Assistant Principal Contracts**

Dr. Genovese shared these contracts with members this summer and per policy, the committee votes to approve them. B. Erickson asked why they did not have the information prior to the contracts being offered. Dr. Genovese said it was a policy oversight and he has never done this in any other district. Dr. Funch noticed vacation and holidays are not always part of the benefits and Dr. Genovese said it depends on how many days the contract is for so not everyone receives vacation time. Dr. Funch asked why one of the assistant principals was given a three year contract rather than a typical one year contract. Dr. Genovese said various recommendations go into this including input from the principals. The contracts are within the

### **QUESTIONS/COMMENTS**

J. Sjoberg said he, B. Erickson and Dr. Genovese attended the Groton selectmen's meeting Monday night to discuss Prescott. The selectmen are waiting for a response from the Attorney General's office regarding the deed restriction on the use of the building before making any decisions.

B. Erickson met with the Peace Book group yesterday and said they have a dedicated group of parents.

B. Erickson reminded everyone there will be a walk-through of Tarbell at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, November 15<sup>th</sup> and a public hearing regarding future uses will be held at the Groton Senior Center at 11:00 a.m. Dr. Genovese said letters have been sent to West Groton residents missed on the original list and someone is interested in putting it on the List Serve. J. Sjoberg advised he put the draft report on the List Serve since it answers some of the questions people have.

### **REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES**

**Policy** - P. Carson reported they have a list of examples for the advertising policy and a new category needs to be added. They discussed possible impacts the recent vote to decriminalize marijuana might have on people's perceptions of the district's policies and they are making it a priority to make sure they are well understood by everyone.

**Budget & Finance** - C. McKinney reported they met earlier today. The quarterly report will be out the first of December.

**Communications Committee** - J. Frey reported they will meet at Tarbell on Friday at 9:00 a.m.

**Think Tank Committee** - B. Erickson reported the committee would like to meet with the school committee. A written report will be included in the next packets and they will attend the December 3<sup>rd</sup> school committee meeting.

**Retirement of Facilities Update** - (See earlier comments regarding Tarbell walk-through)

**Report of Director of Business & Finance** - T. Sheehan reported they are still not getting accurate dates from the vendor for the installation of the replacement elevator at Swallow Union. He will be contacting the company to get a date that will be honored.

**Update on Trash Disposal** - T. Sheehan reported sealed bids were opened last week for a three year contract for solid waste removal and disposal and the bids were a reasonable level based on the previous contract. There were some irregularities in the way the bids were constructed and how vendors responded to the Invitation for Bid. On the advice of legal counsel, they exercised their right to reject all bids and cancel the Invitation for Bid. They will be going out for another competitive proposal later this week that will have a slightly different format to give the district a bit more flexibility and provide a broader selection of vendors.

On Monday, the district issued a Request for Proposals for a consulting contract to assist the district with the transition to the GIC. The submission deadline is December 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Report of the Chair** - Dr. Funch reported that at his request, members received a list of administrators and their contract salaries in their packets last week. He believes there are some discrepancies between what was agreed to last June and what is in the budget and would like to discuss this at their next meeting.

Dr. Genovese requested questions be submitted to him prior to the meeting.

**Report of the Superintendent** - No report

**ACTION ITEMS**

**Non Consent Action Items Discussion**

None

**VOTE: Consent Action Items**

None

**VOTE: To Approve Charge of Communications Sub-Committee**

J. SJOBERG MOVED THEY ACCEPT THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE CHARGE AS PRESENTED.  
SECONDED BY J. FREY

J. FREY MOVED TO AMEND THE MOTION TO ADD TO THE LIST OF COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS AN  
ADDITIONAL ITEM THAT SAYS THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE WILL PROVIDE AS NEEDED  
SUPPORT TO THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE AND SUB-COMMITTEES FOR ANY AD-HOC  
COMMUNICATION NEEDED. SECONDED BY C. MCKINNEY

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

The main motion now reads:

J. SJOBERG MOVED THEY ACCEPT THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE CHARGE AS PRESENTED  
AND ADD TO THE LIST OF COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS, AN ADDITIONAL ITEM THAT SAYS THE  
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE WILL PROVIDE AS NEEDED SUPPORT TO THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
AND SUB-COMMITTEES FOR ANY AD-HOC COMMUNICATION NEEDED. SECONDED BY J. FREY

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

**VOTE: To Elect MCAS Delegate Representative**

P. CARSON NOMINATED JIM FREY AS THEIR MASC DELEGATE REPRESENTATIVE  
SECONDED BY P. FUNCH

J. Frey accepted the nomination.

**In Favor:** F. O'Connell, C. McKinney, P. Funch, J. Sjoberg, P. Carson, Be. Erickson

**Abstention:** J. Frey

**VOTE: To Approve Assistant Principals Contracts**

J. SJOBERG MOVED TO ACCEPT AND APPROVE THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS CONTRACTS AS  
PRESENTED. SECONDED BY C. MCKINNEY

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

**ADJOURNMENT**

P. CARSON MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 9:20 p.m. SECONDED BY J. FREY

**SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY**

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith  
Recording Secretary

Transcribed from video tape